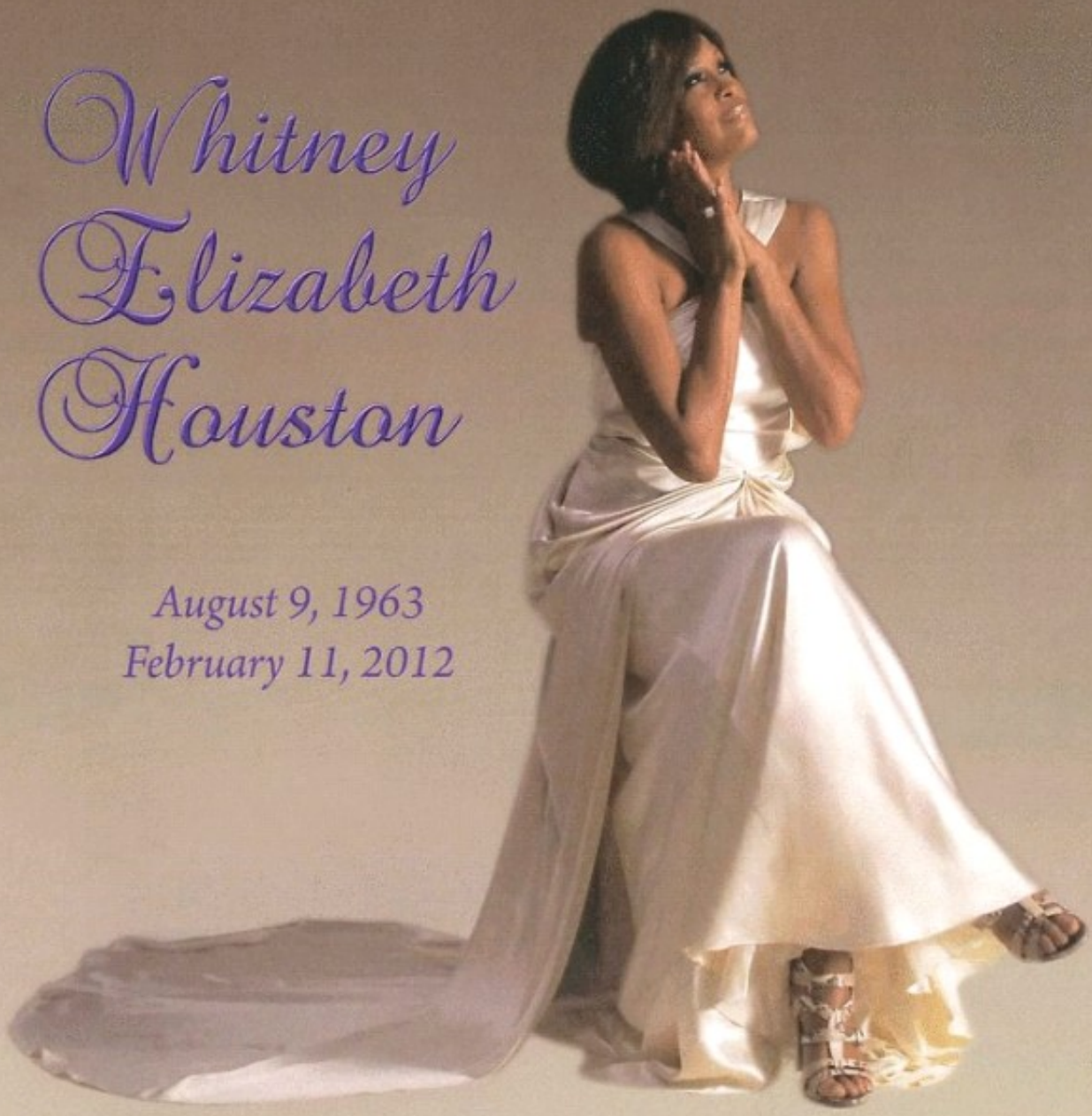
Celebrating the Life of

Whitney Elizabeth Houston



August 9, 1963
February 11, 2012

A Child of God

Obituary

WHITNEY HOUSTON

Throughout the years

With over 170 million combined album, singles and videos sold world-wide during her career with Arista Records, Whitney Houston has established a benchmark for super stardom that will quite simply never be eclipsed in the modern era. She is a singer's singer who has influenced countless other vocalists female and male.

Music historians cite Whitney's record-setting achievements: the only artist to chart seven consecutive #1 Billboard Hot 100 hits ("Saving All My Love For You," "How Will I Know," "Greatest Love Of All," "I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me)," "Didn't We Almost Have It All," "So Emotional," and "Where Do Broken Hearts Go"); the first female artist to enter the Billboard 200 album chart at #1 (her second album, Whitney, 1987); and the only artist with seven consecutive multi-platinum albums (Whitney Houston, Whitney, I'm Your Baby Tonight, The Bodyguard, Waiting To Exhale, and The Preacher's Wife soundtracks, and My Love Is Your Love).

In fact, The Bodyguard soundtrack is one of the top 10 biggest selling albums of all-time (at 17x-platinum in the U.S. alone), and Whitney's career-selling U.S. single of all-time (4x-platinum).

Born into a musical family on August 9, 1963, in Newark, New Jersey, Whitney's success might've been foretold. Her legendary heritage is as familiar as America's greatest icons: the daughter of famed singer Cissy Houston (who made her name in the Drinkards gospel quartet, and later the Sweet Inspirations vocal group of Aretha Franklin and Elvis Presley renown); and the cousin of singers Dee Dee Warwick

(who introduced the original '60s versions of "You're No Good" and "I'm Gonna Make You Love Me") and her sister, superstar Dionne Warwick. Whitney's mother and cousins nurtured her passion for gospel music since birth. As a teenager, Whitney was already singing on the scene in New York, and records with her first young performances in the '70s and early '80s album credits with such eclectic acts as Michael Zager, Chaka Khan, Herbie Mann, the Neville Brothers, Bill Laswell's Material, and others are much sought-after collectors items.

In 1983, near the end of Arista's first mega-successful decade of operation, Clive Davis was taken to a New York nightclub where Whitney was performing and signed her on the spot. Two years went into the making of her debut album, but the results were worth it. The self-titled Whitney Houston (March 1985) launched Arista's second decade, and yielded a string of hits including "You Give Good Love" and three consecutive #1 singles, the Grammy-winning "Saving All My Love For You,: "How Will I Know," and "The Greatest Love Of All," which has become a veritable anthem. Not only did the album establish her as an important new recording artist, but it went on to sell over 12 million copies in the U.S., plus many millions more abroad. This LP set the record as the biggest selling debut album by a solo artist.

With the highly anticipated release of her second album Whitney (June 1987), she made history as the first female artist to enter the Billboard album charts at #1. The new album soared past 9x-platinum on the strength of four

#1 chart-toppers, the Grammy-winning "I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me,)" "Didn't We Almost Have It All," So Emotional," and "Where Do Broken Hearts Go." This established Whitney as the only artist ever to have seven consecutive #1 hits, surpassing a record previously set by the Beatles and the Bee Gees.

Whitney's third best-selling album I'm Your Baby Tonight (November 1990), displayed her versatility on a new batch of tough rhythmic grooves, soulful ballads and up-tempo dance tracks. With back-to-back #1 for the title tune and "All The Man I That I Need," followed by "Miracle" and "My Name Is Not Susan," sales records were set once again, as the album became an international multi-platinum best-seller, to the tune of 8 million copies worldwide.

After establishing her screen appeal on her well-received video clips she dominated MTV's rotations during its first decade on the air Whitney finally made her movie debut in The Bodyguard (November 1992), in which she co-starred with Oscar-winning actor/director Kevin Costner. The film not only broke box office records worldwide but was ultimately responsible for the biggest selling motion picture soundtrack album of all time, voted the Grammy-winning Album of the Year.

"I Will Always Love You," the first single release, became the biggest selling commercial single in history, and reaped Grammys for Record of The Year and Best Female Pop Vocal. Three other singles from the album; "I'm Every Woman," "I Have Nothing," and "Run To You," were also major international hits for Whitney. The Bodyguard soundtrack album, featuring six Whitney Houston songs in all, has sold more than 42 million copies worldwide. At 17x-platinum in the U.S., it is the biggest selling motion picture soundtrack album in history, ahead of Saturday Night Fever, Forrest Gump, Titanic and so on.

Film work continued with Waiting To Exhale (which opened December 1995, preceded by the soundtrack album in November). The critically acclaimed film, starring Whitney with Angela Bassett, Loretta Devine and Lela Rochon, and directed by Forrest Whitaker, went on to gross over $70 million (in '90s dollars). The soundtrack for Waiting To Exhale featured three new tracks from Whitney: the #1 Pop/#1 R&B "Exhale (Shoop Shoop)"; the top 10 Pop and R&B follow-up "Count On Me" (a duet with CeCe Winans), co-written by Whitney and Babyface; and "Why Does It Hurt So Bad." The album spent five weeks at #1, was certified 7x-platinum in the U.S. and has sold nearly twice that worldwide to date.

Whitney's third motion picture, The Preacher's Wife (Buena Vista, December 1996), also starring Denzel Washington and Cortney B. Vance, and directed by Penny Marshall, was based on the 1947 classic, The Bishop's Wife (with Cary Grant and Loretta Young). The gospel-soaked Arista soundtrack, Whitney's lifelong dream, became the biggest-selling gospel album in Billboard chart history, 3x-platinum in the U.S. alone. Collaborations with an extraordinary roster of artists and producers (among them Grammy and Dove Award winner Mervyn Warren of Sister Act I and Sister Act II fame) resulted in a unique album. Whitney sang lead vocals on 14 of the album's 15 tracks, including the beautiful first single "I Believe In You And Me," "Step By Step" (written by Annie Lennox), and two songs produced by Grammy award winner Babyface. Cissy turned the familiar 23rd Psalms into a spiritually touching song. "The Lord Is My Shepherd"; whole other luminaries on the album included Shirley Caesar and the Georgia Mass Choir.

Whitney added the medium of made-for-television movies to her list of accomplishments when "The Wonderful World of Disney aired the musical Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella in November 1997. The special starred Whitney as the Fairy Godmother, Brandy as Cinderella, Bernadette Peters as the wicked stepmother, Whoopi Goldberg as the queen, and all-star multi-cultural cast. The program drew a U.S. audience of more than 60 million viewers, and gave the ABC network its highest Sunday night rating in over a decade. Whitney and her company, BrownHouse Productions, served as executive producers on the project, which garnered seven Emmy nominations including Outstanding Variety, Musical or Comedy. The home video version shattered previous records to become the best-selling video ever of a made-for-television movie.

The next year, fans ecstatically received Whitney's first non-soundtrack related studio album in eight years, My Love Is Your Love (November 1998), which she produced with Clive Davis. Whitney proved her ability to stay absolutely contemporary with the first single, the #1 R&B #2 Pop "Heartbreak Hotel" featuring Faith Evans and Kelly Price. It was the beginning of a string of gold and platinum chart hit singles from the album spanning nearly a year and a half (into the spring 2000): the Grammy-winning "It's Not Right But It's Okay"; "When You Believe" (a duet with Mariah Carey, from The Prince Of Egypt); the title tune "My Love Is Your Love"; and "I Learned From The Best" (written by Diane Warren, produced and arranged by David Foster).

The success of My Love Is Your Love kicked off a phenomenal year for Whitney. She stole the show at VH1's second Annual "Divas Live/099," with a performance characterized as "invincible" by Jon Pareles in the New York Time's Sharing the stage with a lineup that included Cher, Tina Turner, Mary J. Blige and others, Whitney emerged as the star. VH1 announced that the show was the highest-rated telecast in its history.

At the same time, gold, platinum and multi-platinum album sales were certified in every corner of the globe: Austria, Belgium, Canada, England, France, Germany, Spain, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa, Thailand, Taiwan, Singapore and more. In late-June, as "It's Not Right But It's Okay" became the 17th Top 5 pop hit of her career, Whitney commenced a successful world tour playing 16 cities in North America. The tour concluded in Europe in November.

At the 42nd Annual Grammy Awards in February 2000, 15 months after the album release, Whitney received her sixth career Grammy, as "It's Not Right But It's Okay" was voted Best Female R&B Vocal. Winning her first R&B Grammy award in a category that included Mary J. Blige, Brandy, Faith Evans, and Macy Gray was extremely gratifying for Whitney Houston, especially after three previous Grammy awards for Best Female Pop Vocal: in 1985 ("Saving All My Love For You"), 1987 ("I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me)"), and 1993 ("I Will Always Love You").

A month later in March 2000, Whitney was named Female Artist Of the Decade at the "Soul Train" Music Awards annual ceremonies virtually 15 years to the day since her debut single, "You Give Good Love" entered the Billboard Hot Black Singles chart on March 9, 1985.

In the midst of her 15th anniversary year as an Arista recording artist, the double-album Whitney The Greatest Hits (May 2000) celebrated the past, present and future. In addition to newly-recorded tracks with Enrique Iglesias, Deborah Cox, George Michael, and Q-Tip, there were rare vintage tracks unavailable for a decade, impossible-to-find club mixes, and bonus tracks. The collection encompassed Whitney's success as a mainstay on the Pop and R&B singles front (on the double-CD/cassette), as a screen presence since her career began at the label (on DVD and VHS home-video), and in the clubs as a remixer's delight (on a limited edition four-record vinyl box-set).

Individually, the 36-track double-CD/cassette comprised one volume of single hits (Cool Down) and another volume of memorable club mixes (Throw Down), each spanning Whitney's entire career to date, 1985 to 2000.

She recorded new duets for the occasion with Enrique Inglesias (the Diane Warren composition, "Could I Have This Kiss Forever:)," and then Arista label-mate Deborah Cox ("Same Script, Different Cast"), plus a new version of "If I Told You That" (from My Love Is Your Love), remade as a duet with George Michael.

Hard-to-find rarities included "One Moment In Time" the 1988 Summer Olympics theme: 1991's Super Bowl XXV version of "The Star Spangled Banner"; and a 1986 duet with Jermaine Jackson ("If You Say My Eyes Are Beautiful") released only on his second Arista album, Precious Moments, never as a single.

The two CDs (and Cassettes) were programmed that each volume displayed the full range of Whitney's career. Disc 1 (Cool Down), for example, built from her first hits of 1985, "You Give Good Love," "Saving All My Love For You," and "Greatest Love Of All," all the way through 2000. Disc 2 (Throw Down) recapped the hits from "My Love Is Your Love" with club remixes of "It's Not Right But It's Okay," "My Love Is Your Love," "Heartbreak Hotel," and "I learned From The Best" followed by ten more hits remixed by Junior Vasquez, David Morales, Jellybean, Hex Hector, C+C Music Factory's Clivilles and Cole, and others.

Those remixers were showcased on Whitney The Unreleased Mixes, a special limited-edition four-record vinyl box-set acknowledging her importance in clubs around the world. There were seven songs, eight mixes, one track on each side of four 12-inch vinyl discs: "How Will I Know," "Greatest Love Of All," "I'm Every Woman," "Love Will Save the Day," "I Will Always Love You," "So Emotional," and "I'm Your Baby Tonight."

Whitney The Greatest Hits was also the title of Whitney's first DVD and VHS home-video collection. The lion's share of her hits were included in its 21 titles, a combination of video clips (with such noted directors as Wayne Isham, Peter Isrealson, Julian Temple, Randee St. Nicholas, Brian Grant, and Kevin Bray), and live performance. Links were provided to such rarities as her television premier (on "The Merv Griffin show" in 1985), appearances on several awards show, a tune from Rogers & Hammerstein's Cinderella, interview segments featuring Whitney and her co-producer, Arista president Clive Davis, and much more.

The week after the release of Whitney The Greatest Hits, she appeared on the NBC television network special benefit concert "25 Years of #1 Hits: Arista Records' Anniversary Celebration," a tribute to the label as well as its founder and leader, Clive Davis.

In the aftermath of the World Trade Center disaster of September 11, 2001, Whitney's soaring rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" (from Greatest Hits) was the first benefit single to be issued, coupled with her version of "America the Beautiful." The Whitney Houston Foundation For Children, Inc. and Arista Records agreed to donate royalties and net proceeds from all single sales to the New York Firefighters 9-11 Disaster Relief Fund and the New York Fraternal Order of Police. Both groups as well as the families of those affected by the tragic event were to benefit from the sales.

The following year saw the release of Just Whitney (December 2002), her fifth studio album and first for the new millennium. An A-list of handpicked hitmakers and producers contributed to the album, among them Kenneth 'Babyface' Edmonds, Missy Elliott, Kevin "She'kspere' Briggs, Teddy Bishop and Gordon Chambers. The diverse program of ballads included "Try It On My Own," (written by Babyface and Carole Bayer Sager): "My Love" (a duet with Bobby Brown); and a powerful remake of Debbie Boone's 1977 "You Light Up My Life." Also among the album's gems "Things You Say" (written and produced by Missy Elliott).

Every artist's first Christmas collection is a special career landmark, and Whitney's One Wish-The Holiday Album (November 2003), her most recent album release, was no exception. Whitney worked with producers and arrangers Troy Taylor, Mervyn Warren, and the team of Gordon Chambers and Barry J. Eastmond on a joyous mix of yuletide favorites from the traditional and contemporary songbooks, along with several new compositions.

The album opened with the classic "The First Noel" and Mel TormZ's timeless "The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting On An Open Fire)." Other favorites included Freddie Jackson's "One Wish (For Christmas)," "Cantique De Noel (O Holy Night)," "O Come O Come Emanuel," and a medley of "Deck The Halls/Silent Night." Two tracks originated on The Preacher's Wife soundtrack, "Who Would Imagine A King" and "Joy To The World." The centerpiece was 10-year old daughter Bobbi Kristina Houston Brown's recording debut on "Little Drummer Boy."

The Guinness Book of World Records lists Whitney as music's "most awarded female artist of all time," with an amazing tally that is certainly topped by two Emmy Awards, six Grammy Awards, 16 Billboard Music Awards, and 23 American Music Awards, as well as MTV VMAs in the U.S. and Europe, NAACP Image Awards, BET Awards, "Soul Train" music Awards, and so on. She received the Nickelodeon "Kids Choice" award (she was inducted into the "KidsChoice" Hall Of Fame in 1996), the Dove (Gospel Music Association) Award, and Blockbuster Entertainment Award. Whitney was inducted into the BET (Black Entertainment Television) Walk Of Fame in 1996; and received "Soul Train's prestigious Quincy Jones Career Achievement Award in 1998.

True to her church upbringing, the Whitney Houston Foundation For Children, Inc. was established in 1989 as a non-profit organization that cares for such problems as homelessness, children with cancer and AIDS, and other issues of self-empowerment. In June 1995, the Foundation was awarded a VH1 Honor for its charitable work. Funds have been raised for numerous causes involving children around the world, from South Africa to Newark, and generated over $300,000 for the Children's Defense Fund as a result of 1997 HBO concert.

Whitney's tireless efforts have earned recognition from such organizations as St. Jude Children's Hospital, the United Negro College Fund, and the Children's Diabetes Foundation, all of whom have benefited from the heart and soul of a great artist and humanitarian. Singing to audiences on every continent, Whitney has won her worldwide following the old-fashioned way, digging deep down into her soul and finding common threads with her millions of fans.

In the fall of 2011, Whitney got to fulfill her lifelong dream of bringing a remake of the film SPARKLE to the silver screen. Eleven years prior, Whitney had secured the rights to this film (one of her favorites when she was a young teen) and had cast Aaliyah in the title role. After Aaliyah's tragic passing in a plane crash, the movie was shelved until earlier this year when a Sony executive took interest.

The film got the green light and they commenced shooting in early October in Detroit. Now the role of Sparkle was being played by Jordin Sparks, in her first film. Whitney plays the mother, Emma, as well as being an Executive Producer of the film. Whitney said this was one of her favorite roles and she loved every minute of the six week shoot. The cast and crew bonded as a family. Along with Jordin Sparks, Derek Luke, Mike Epps, Tika Sumpter, Carmen Ejogo and Omari Hardwick, the film wrapped right before Thanksgiving and will be released this year by TRI STAR and Stage Six Films. Whitney's performance is "luminous", said Debra Chase, co-producer of the film.

Along with SPARKLE, Whitney was also working on a remake of a Judy Garland film and was planning to film the sequel to Waiting To Exhale.

She leaves to cherish her beautiful spirit, her mother Cissy Houston, her daughter Bobbi Kristina, her brothers Gary and Michael Houston, her sisters in law Patricia and Donna Houston, her uncle Larry Drinkard, her aunt Ruth Drinkard, her cousin Dionne Warwick, her nieces Rayah, Blaire, Aja, her nephews Gary Michael, Jonathan, her godsons Nicholas and Nathan and a host of cousins, loving friends and extended family.

In lieu of flowers the family requests donations to The Whitney E. Houston Academy of Creative and Performing Arts, PO Box 835, South Plainfield, NJ 07080. A special memorial for Whitney will be announced.

Order of Worship

Officiant ~ Dionne Warwick

Processional

The New Hope Mass Choir and New Jersey Mass Choir ..... "The Lord is My Shepherd"

Scripture ..... Pastor Joe A. Carter
The 23rd Psalms and John 14:1-6

Solo..... Rev. Donnie McClurkin
"Stand"

Expressions ..... Tyler Perry

Solo..... BeBe Winans
"Home"

Expressions ..... Bishop T.D. Jakes

Solo..... Rev. Kim Burell
"I Believe in You and Me"

Expressions ..... Kevin Costner

Solo..... Aretha Franklin
"The Greatest Love Of All"

Expressions ..... Clive Davis
Ray Watson

Solo..... Stevie Wonder
"A Ribbon In The Sky"

Expressions ..... Rickey Minor

Medley ..... Alicia Keys

Solo..... R. Kelly
"I Look To You"

Family Expressions..... Patricia Houston
Dionne Warwick

Solo..... CeCe Winans
"Don't Cry For Me"

Eulogy..... Rev. Marvin Winans

Recessional ~ Whitney Houston

"I Will Always Love You"

Honorary Pall Bearers

Gary Houston
Michael Houston
Ray Watson
Billy Evans
Brad Harper
David Elliott
Damon Elliott
Barry Warrick
Bob Fontenot
Gregory Moss
Gerard Drinkard
Larry Drinkard
Nicholas Gordon

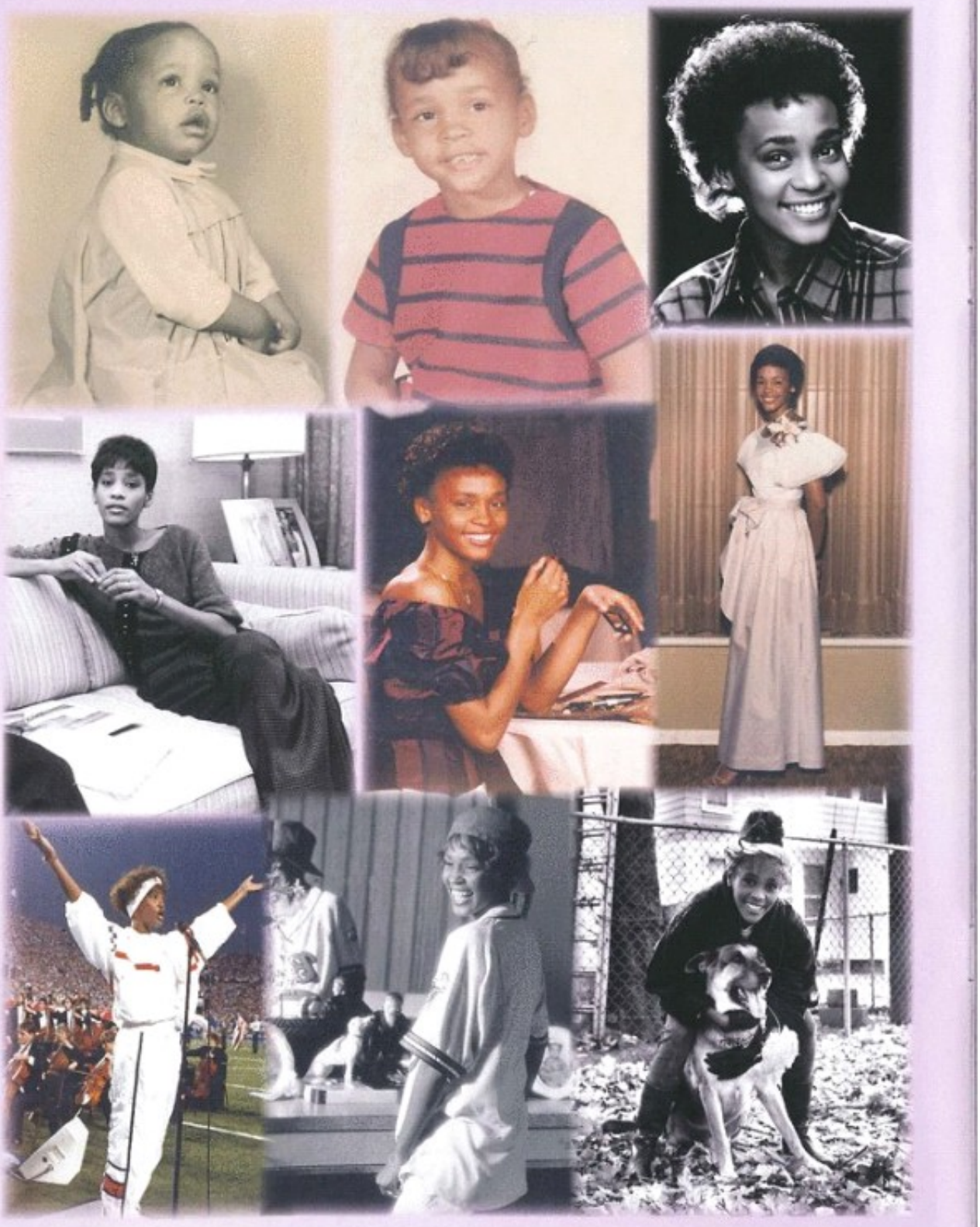
Final Arrangement

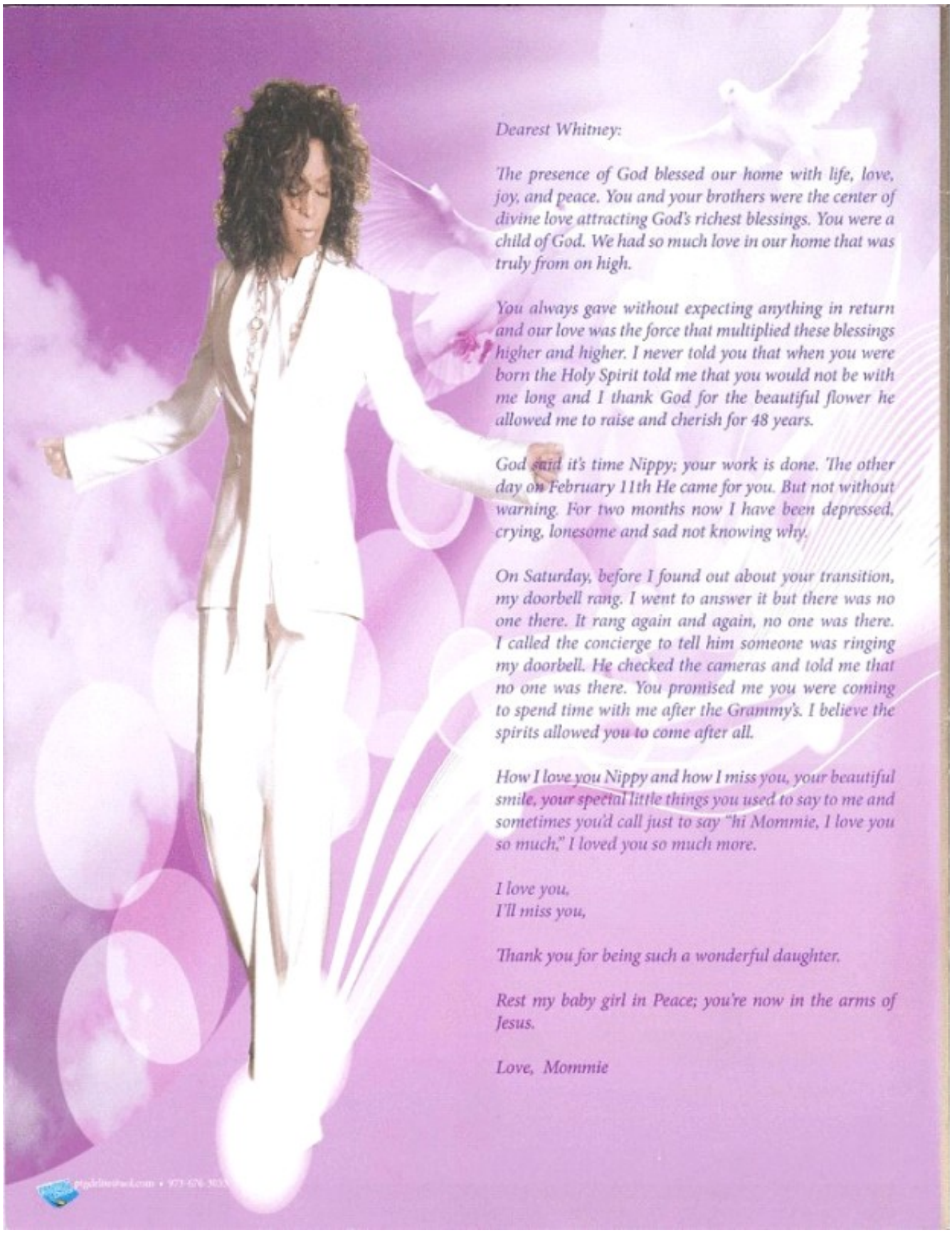
Whigham Funeral Home
580 Martin Luther King Blvd.
Newark, NJ 07102

In Appreciation

For all who have shown our family so much love and compassion for our great loss and to all who have offered words of encouragement and prayer.
We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

The Family





Dearest Whitney:

The presence of God blessed our home with life, love, joy, and peace. You and your brothers were the center of divine love attracting God's richest blessings. You were a child of God. We had so much love in our home that was truly from on high.

You always gave without expecting anything in return and our love was the force that multiplied these blessings higher and higher. I never told you that when you were born the Holy Spirit told me that you would not be with me long and I thank God for the beautiful flower he allowed me to raise and cherish for 48 years.

God said it's time Nippy; your work is done. The other day on February 11th He came for you. But not without warning. For two months now I have been depressed, crying, lonesome and sad not knowing why.

On Saturday, before I found out about your transition, my doorbell rang. I went to answer it but there was no one there. It rang again and again, no one was there. I called the concierge to tell him someone was ringing my doorbell. He checked the cameras and told me that no one was there. You promised me you were coming to spend time with me after the Grammy's. I believe the spirits allowed you to come after all.

How I love you Nippy and how I miss you, your beautiful smile, your special little things you used to say to me and sometimes you'd call just to say "hi Mommie, I love you so much," I loved you so much more.

I love you,
I'll miss you,

Thank you for being such a wonderful daughter.

Rest my baby girl in Peace; you're now in the arms of Jesus.

Love, Mommie